

VZCZCXR05717

RR RUEHAST RUEHDH RUEHHM RUEHLN RUEHMA RUEHPB RUEHPOD RUEHSL RUEHTM
RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKO #2008/01 2440427
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 010427Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5885
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO CITY 0644
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7418
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0755
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 6224
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 3616
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 8561
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 0039
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 6742
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3579
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 7033
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC 8654
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY IA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMFIUU/USFJ

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 002008

UNCLAS TOKYO

DEPT FOR OES/IHB AMBASSADOR LOFTIS
DEPT FOR EAP/J, EAP/EX, CA
USDA PASS TO APHIS, FAS FOR BURDETT
HHS PASS TO CDC
HHS FOR OGHA
DEPT PASS TO AID/GH/HIDN

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [AEMR](#) [AES](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [TBIO](#) [KSAF](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#)
AMGT, MG, EAGR, JA
SUBJECT: MGSF01 SEPTEMBER 1 UPDATE ON H1N1 OUTBREAK IN JAPAN

REF: TOKYO 1925 and previous

TOKYO 00002008 001.2 OF 002

¶1. Summary: Three additional H1N1-related deaths have been confirmed in Japan, bringing the total number of deaths linked to the novel influenza to eight. The infection rate during the week of August 17 to August 23 stood at 2.47 patients per medical facility, up from 1.69 patients per facility the previous week. The Japanese government expects about 25 million people, or about 20 percent of the population, to become infected with H1N1 by the end of this year, with the peak coming around late September to early October. End Summary.

EPIDEMIC LEVELS EXCEEDED, FURTHER RISE EXPECTED

¶2. H1N1 novel influenza has continued to spread rapidly in Japan, signaling a very early start to the flu season and suggesting a more rapid spread of infections this fall, according to Japan's National Institute for Infectious Diseases (NIID). H1N1 news continues to feature prominently in the Japanese media. Authorities confirmed two deaths August 29: a female cancer patient in her 60s from Kagoshima Prefecture, and a 38 year old woman with a history of epilepsy from Hyogo Prefecture. To alleviate public concern, officials emphasize that there were factors in addition to H1N1 that contributed to the death of the younger woman. An additional death was confirmed on September 1 in Hokkaido Prefecture, a public health official in her 40s with a history of high blood pressure.

¶3. The NIID is reporting an average of 2.47 cases per facility (based on a network of 5000 reporting facilities) for the August 17

to August 23 period. The island of Okinawa records the highest number of infections per facility, at 46.31, up from 29.60 the previous week. Only five of the forty-seven prefectures in Japan have infection rates under one per facility, the epidemic threshold.

The NIID estimates 150,000 people have been infected with some form of novel influenza since H1N1 was first discovered in Japan this past spring.

¶4. The Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW) anticipates the epidemic will peak around late September to early October, when some areas may see 30 percent of the population infected. This includes rural areas, with large numbers of elderly people, and urban areas, with dense populations. The rate of hospitalization in these locations may reach 2.5 percent and the rate of serious infection 0.5 percent. During the fall flu season, MHLW estimates that 25 million people, or some 20 percent of the population, are expected to become infected with H1N1. (Note. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs contact who has close dealings with MHLW told us that these are worst-case scenario figures. End note). The ministry anticipates the rate of H1N1 infection to be twice the rate of normal, seasonal flu. Based on seasonal flu data from the past five years, MHLW estimates that it will take 19 weeks before the H1N1 epidemic ends.

PREPARATIONS KEY

¶5. These estimates, however, do not take into account the effect of vaccinations and other contingencies such as weather factors. MHWL officials say local containment efforts could also lower infection rates. As reported reftel, the Government of Japan (GOJ) expects to have enough vaccine for 13 to 17 million people by the end of this year. However, the total number of people belonging to at-risk

TOKYO 00002008 002.2 OF 002

groups exceeds 50 million, and GOJ expects to compensate for the shortfall with imports of foreign-made vaccine. The GOJ has yet to decide if these vaccines will be given fast-track approval. The GOJ is expected to detail its vaccination policy in September, with inoculations beginning in October.

¶6. On August 27, Embassy Tokyo convened its H1N1 Task Force, consisting of heads of most Embassy sections and agencies. The Task Force reviewed current pandemic flu tripwires, discussed coordination and liaison issues with the GOJ, and agreed on a course of preventive action.